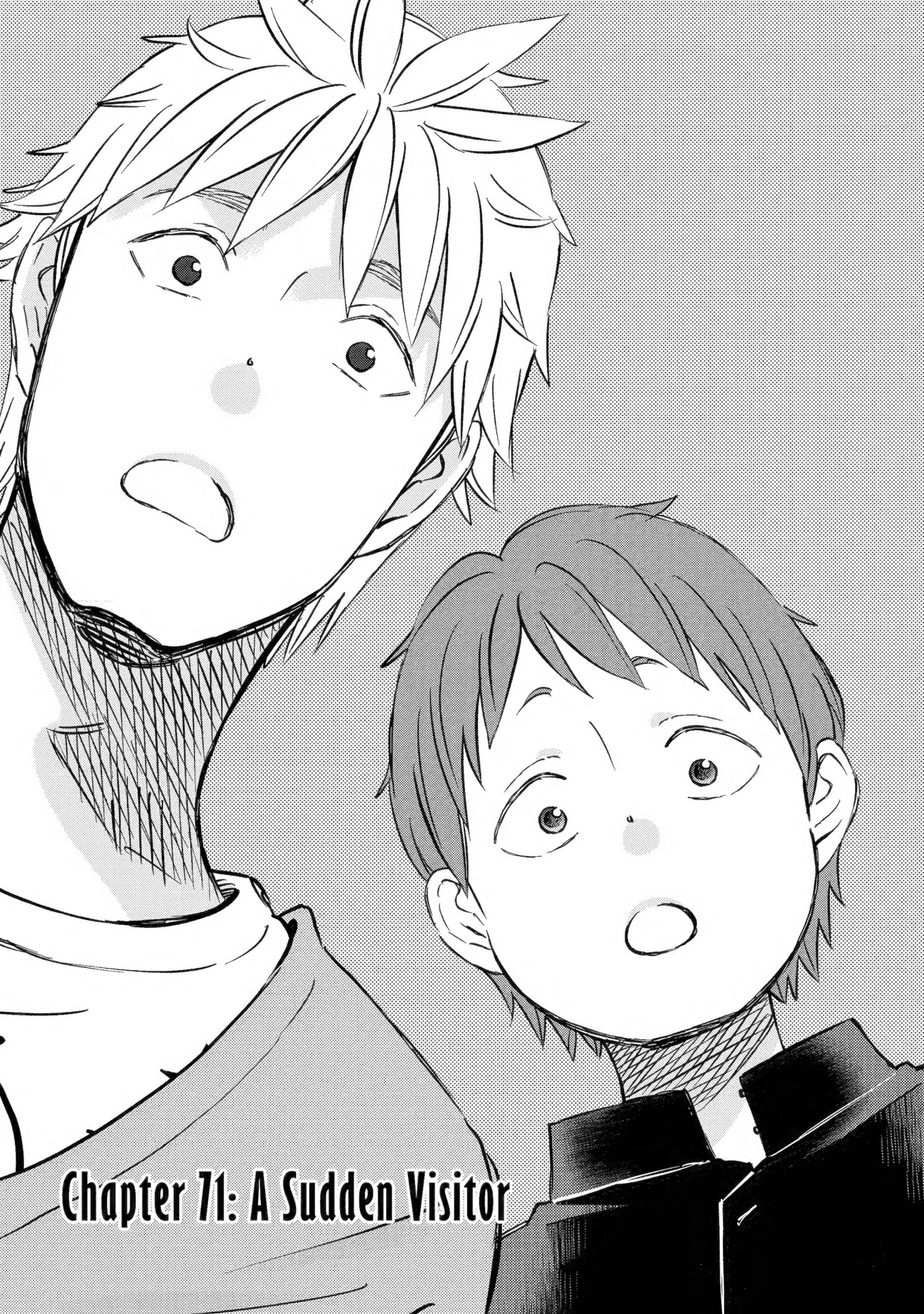

Chapter 71: A Sudden Visitor

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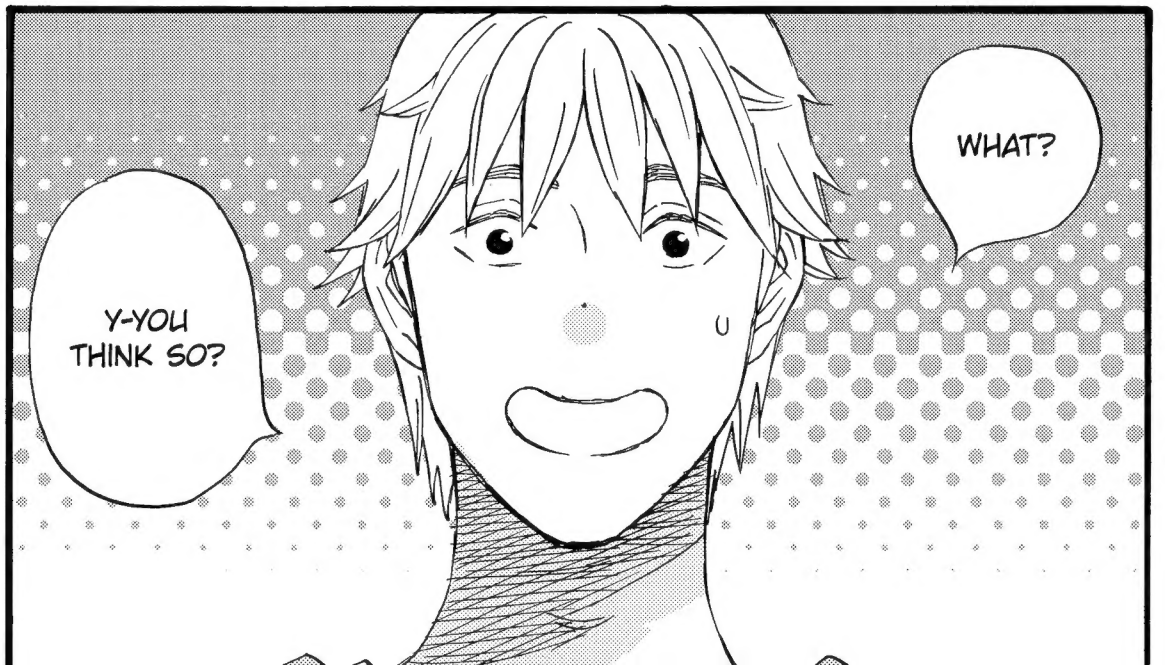
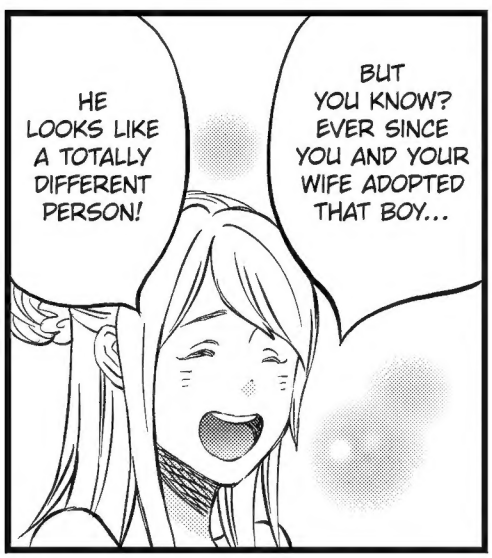
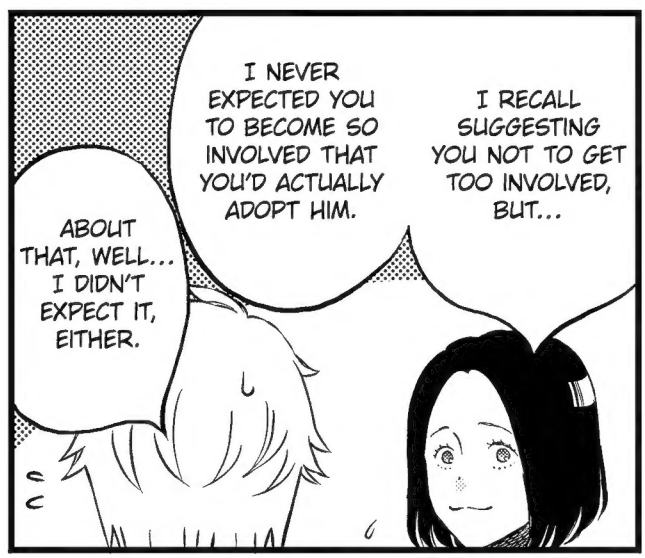
REALLY...
YOU'RE A GREAT PERSON, KIRISHIMA-SAN.


WHAT?
Y-YOU THINK SO?

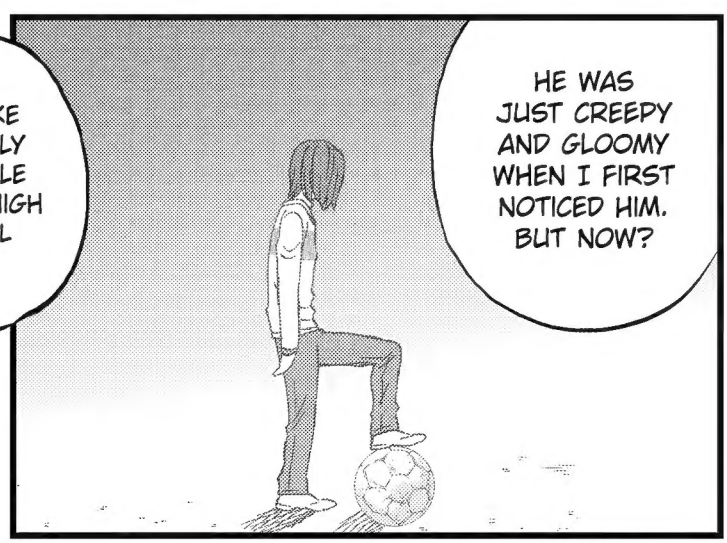
THEN, "FORMERLY FILTHY."
...
...UM, HE'S MY SON NOW. PLEASE DON'T CALL HIM FILTHY...

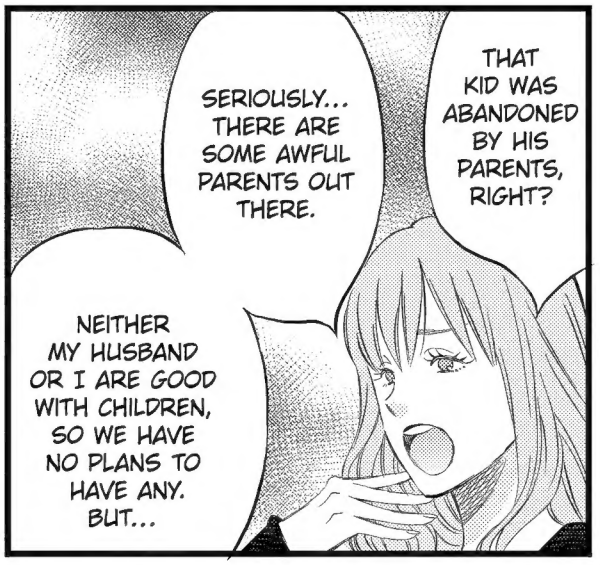
I COULD NEVER DO WHAT YOU DID.
HE'S THAT FILTHY, NEGLECTED KID WHO USED TO WANDER AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD, RIGHT?
THE CHILD YOU ADOPTED, FOR EXAMPLE...
Heh!


HE LOOKS LIKE A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PERSON!
BUT YOU KNOW? EVER SINCE YOU AND YOUR WIFE ADOPTED THAT BOY...

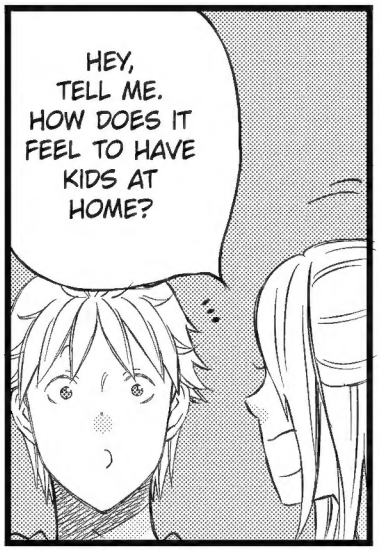

ABOUT THAT, WELL... I DIDN'T EXPECT IT, EITHER.
I NEVER EXPECTED YOU TO BECOME SO INVOLVED THAT YOU'D ACTUALLY ADOPT HIM.
I RECALL SUGGESTING YOU NOT TO GET TOO INVOLVED, BUT...

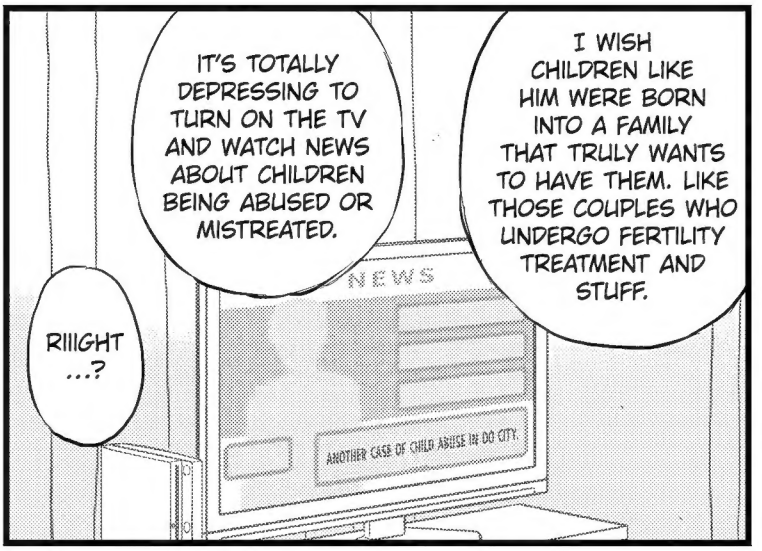
HE'S LIKE A TOTALLY ADORABLE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL KID!


HE WAS JUST CREEPY AND GLOOMY WHEN I FIRST NOTICED HIM. BUT NOW?

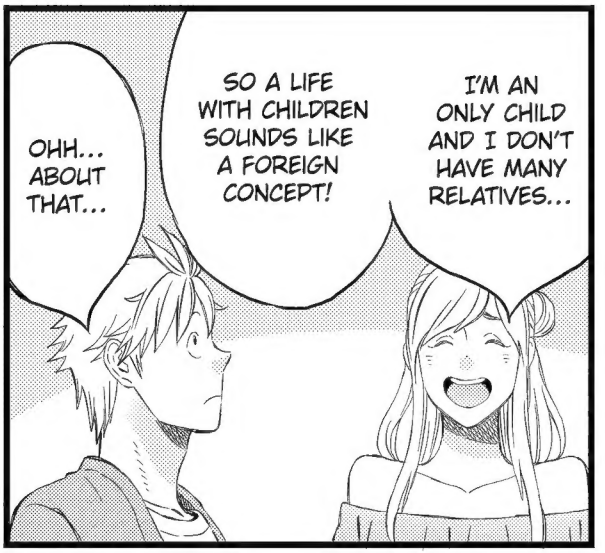

THAT KID WAS ABANDONED BY HIS PARENTS, RIGHT?
SERIOUSLY... THERE ARE SOME AWFUL PARENTS OUT THERE.
NEITHER MY HUSBAND OR I ARE GOOD WITH CHILDREN, SO WE HAVE NO PLANS TO HAVE ANY. BUT...

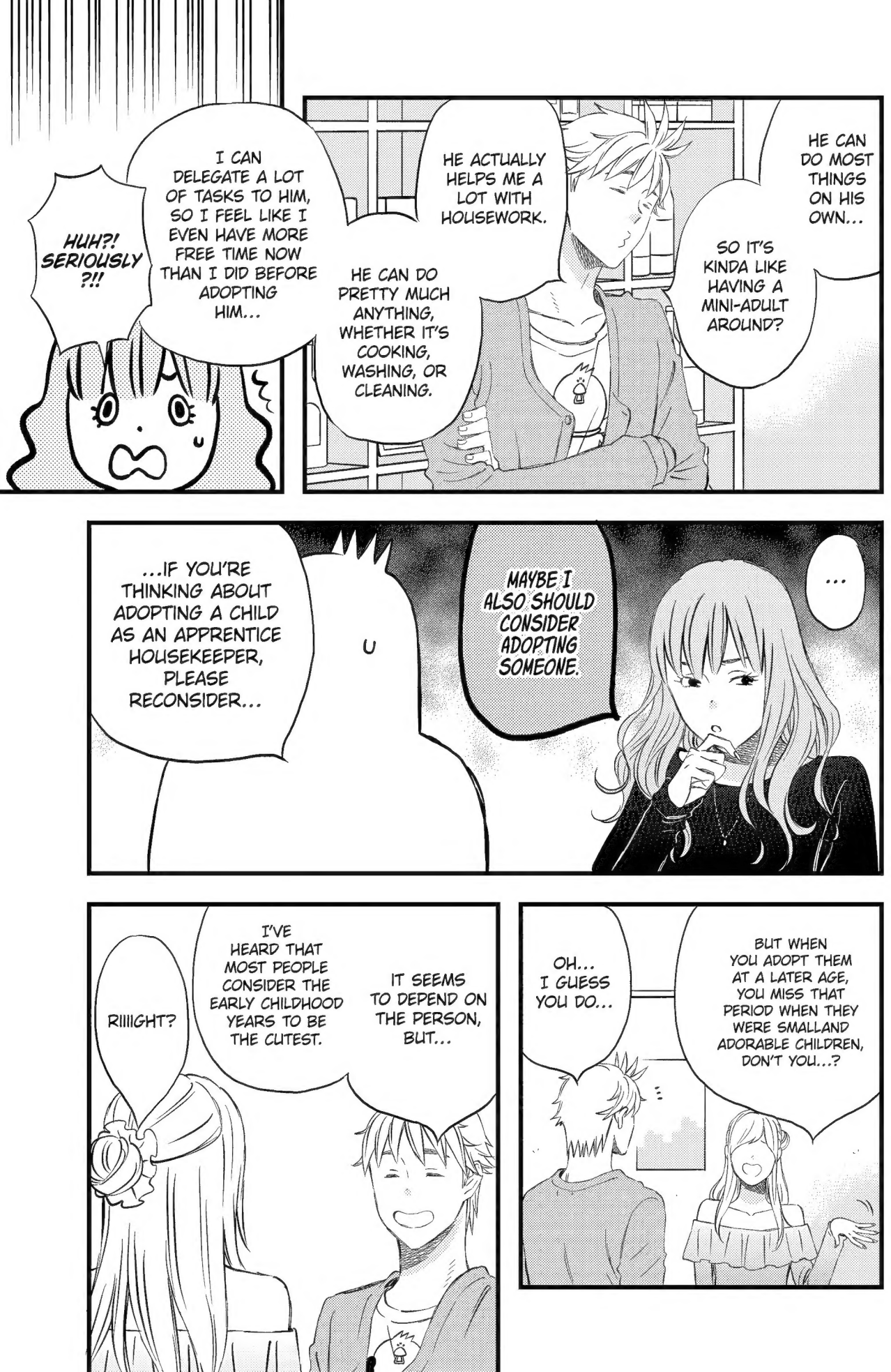
THAT'S TRUE. I'M SO GLAD!
Well...
I FEEL LIKE HIM BEING A GOOD BOY FROM THE START WAS WHAT DREW US TO ADOPT HIM.


HEY, TELL ME. HOW DOES IT FEEL TO HAVE KIDS AT HOME?

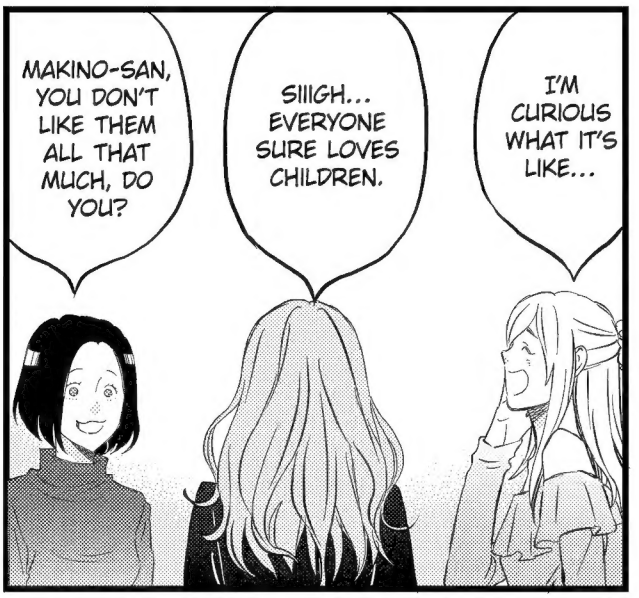

I WISH CHILDREN LIKE HIM WERE BORN INTO A FAMILY THAT TRULY WANTS TO HAVE THEM. LIKE THOSE COUPLES WHO UNDERGO FERTILITY TREATMENT AND STUFF.
IT'S TOTALLY DEPRESSING TO TURN ON THE TV AND WATCH NEWS ABOUT CHILDREN BEING ABUSED OR MISTREATED.
RIIIGHT ...?
NEWS
ANOTHER CASE OF CHILD ABUSE IN DO CITY.

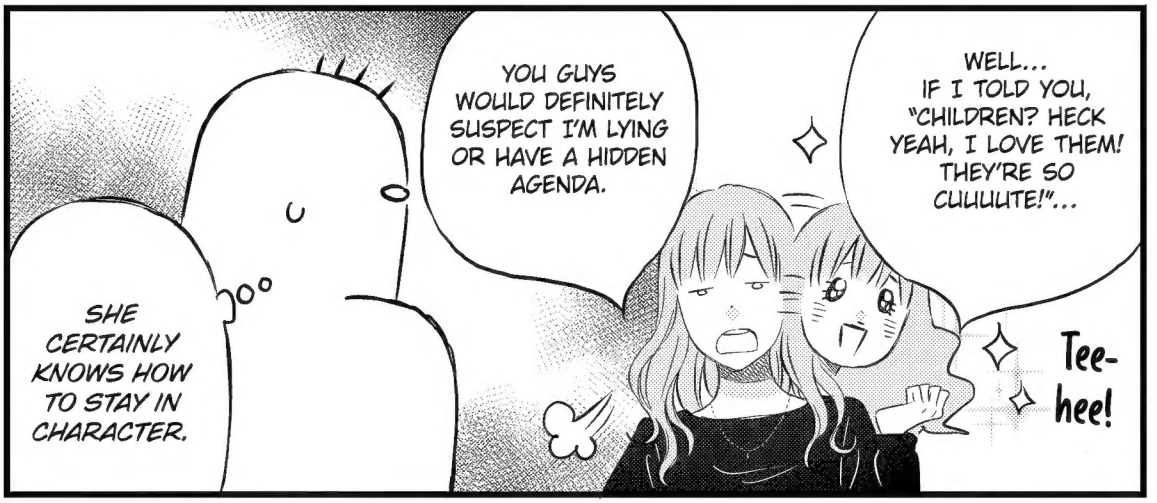
WELL, JUN-KUN IS ALREADY A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT...
SO IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE I'M LIVING WITH A CHILD ALL THAT MUCH...


I'M AN ONLY CHILD AND I DON'T HAVE MANY RELATIVES...
SO A LIFE WITH CHILDREN SOUNDS LIKE A FOREIGN CONCEPT!
OHH... ABOUT THAT...

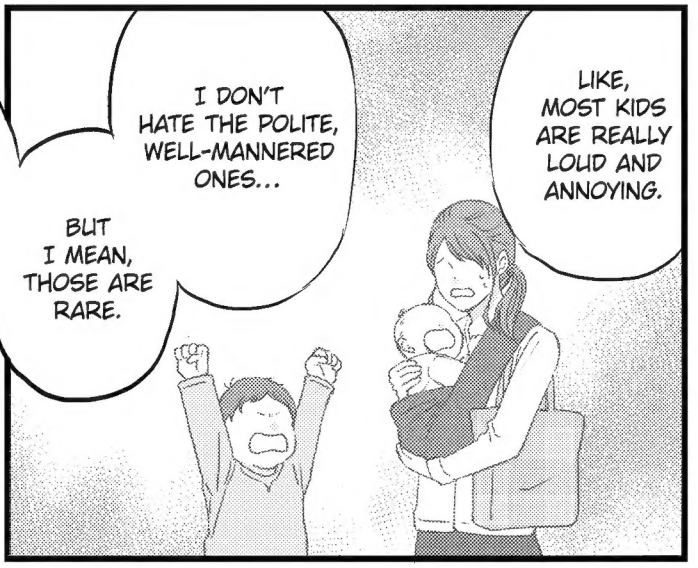

HUH?! SERIOUSLY ?!!
I CAN DELEGATE A LOT OF TASKS TO HIM, SO I FEEL LIKE I EVEN HAVE MORE FREE TIME NOW THAN I DID BEFORE ADOPTING HIM...
HE ACTUALLY HELPS ME A LOT WITH HOUSEWORK.
HE CAN DO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING, WHETHER IT'S COOKING, WASHING, OR CLEANING.
HE CAN DO MOST THINGS ON HIS OWN...
SO IT'S KINDA LIKE HAVING A MINI-ADULT AROUND?
...IF YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT ADOPTING A CHILD AS AN APPRENTICE HOUSEKEEPER, PLEASE RECONSIDER...
U
MAYBE I ALSO SHOULD CONSIDER ADOPTING SOMEONE.
...
RIIIIGHT?
I'VE HEARD THAT MOST PEOPLE CONSIDER THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS TO BE THE CUTEST.
IT SEEMS TO DEPEND ON THE PERSON, BUT...
OH... I GUESS YOU DO...
BUT WHEN YOU ADOPT THEM AT A LATER AGE, YOU MISS THAT PERIOD WHEN THEY WERE SMALLAND ADORABLE CHILDREN, DON'T YOU...?

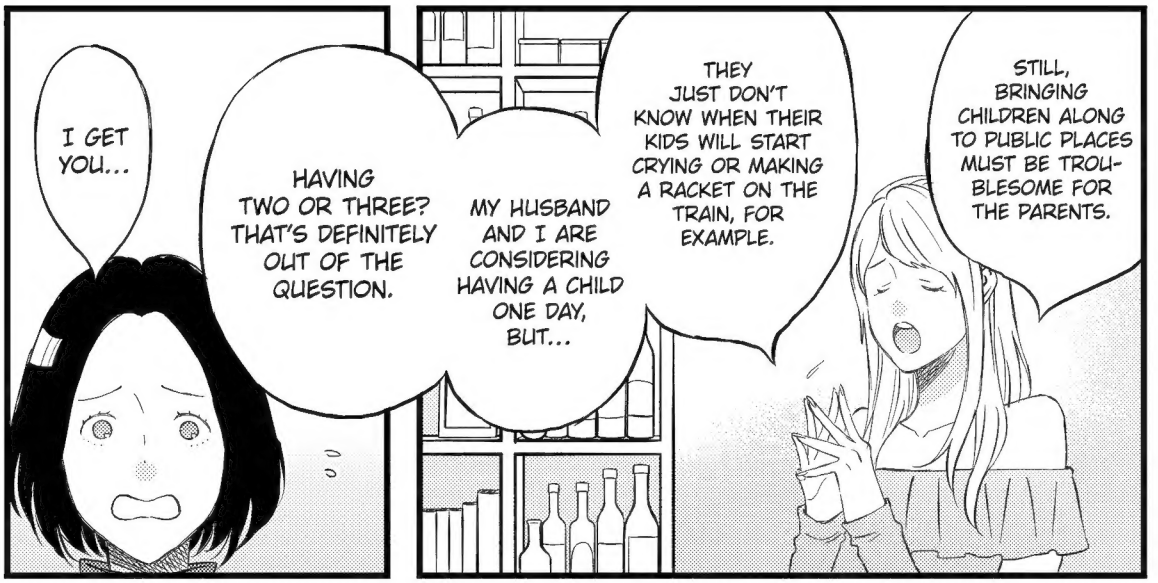
"DON'T LIKE THEM?" I HATE THEM!
I'M SORRY, BUT I DEFINITELY EXPECTED YOU TO SAY THAT.
Urgh!


I'M CURIOUS WHAT IT'S LIKE...
SIIIGH... EVERYONE SURE LOVES CHILDREN.
MAKINO-SAN, YOU DON'T LIKE THEM ALL THAT MUCH, DO YOU?


WELL... IF I TOLD YOU, "CHILDREN? HECK YEAH, I LOVE THEM! THEY'RE SO CUUUUTE!"...
YOU GUYS WOULD DEFINITELY SUSPECT I'M LYING OR HAVE A HIDDEN AGENDA.
Tee-hee!
SHE CERTAINLY KNOWS HOW TO STAY IN CHARACTER.

I ALWAYS THINK, "GEEZ, YOU NEED TO BE TAUGHT MANNERS!"...
Bwaaah!
PISSED OFF

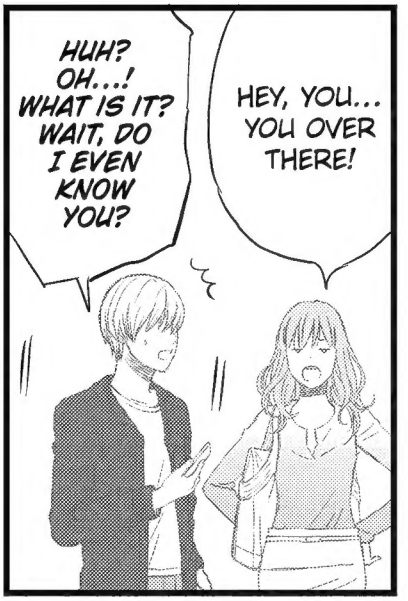

LIKE, MOST KIDS ARE REALLY LOUD AND ANNOYING.
I DON'T HATE THE POLITE, WELL-MANNERED ONES...
BUT I MEAN, THOSE ARE RARE.


I GET YOU...
HAVING TWO OR THREE? THAT'S DEFINITELY OUT OF THE QUESTION.
MY HUSBAND AND I ARE CONSIDERING HAVING A CHILD ONE DAY, BUT...
THEY JUST DON'T KNOW WHEN THEIR KIDS WILL START CRYING OR MAKING A RACKET ON THE TRAIN, FOR EXAMPLE.
STILL, BRINGING CHILDREN ALONG TO PUBLIC PLACES MUST BE TROUBLESOME FOR THE PARENTS.

Expected, but still...
WHOA... DO YOU IGNORE THEM?
EVEN IF THEY GET LOST IN THE SHOPPING MALL...
OF COURSE NOT.

AND THAT'S WHY I TRY NOT TO GET TOO CLOSE TO THEM.
BEFORE CHILDREN ARE RAISED AND TAUGHT TO BE HUMAN, THEY'RE PRETTY MUCH ANIMALS. THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS.

WHAAAT...?
THERE'S A LOST CHILD DEPARTMENT ON THE 2ND FLOOR, SO HURRY UP! I FEEL BAD FOR THE POOR THING!
WHAAAT?! WHY ME...?
DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT LOST KID.
Waaaah!
YUP, SHE'S NOT A BAD PERSON. BUT SHE'S CERTAINLY DIFFICULT...


HUH? OH...! WHAT IS IT? WAIT, DO I EVEN KNOW YOU?
HEY, YOU... YOU OVER THERE!

OH. IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR ME TO GO SHOPPING.

OH, YEAH. TIME SURE FLEW BY!

SEE YOU, KIRISHIMA-SAN!

WHAT SHOULD WE HAVE FOR DINNER TONIGHT...?

YESTERDAY WE HAD FISH, SO... MEAT?

I'LL LOOK FOR A BARGAIN...

Tmp

Tmp

HEY, FATHER!

OH!

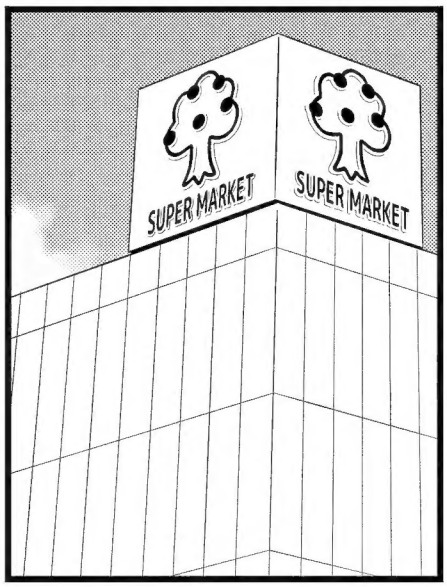
GOING HOME, JUN-KUN? YOU'RE EARLY TODAY.

EXAMS ARE COMING UP, AND THAT MEANS SHORTENED CLASSES.

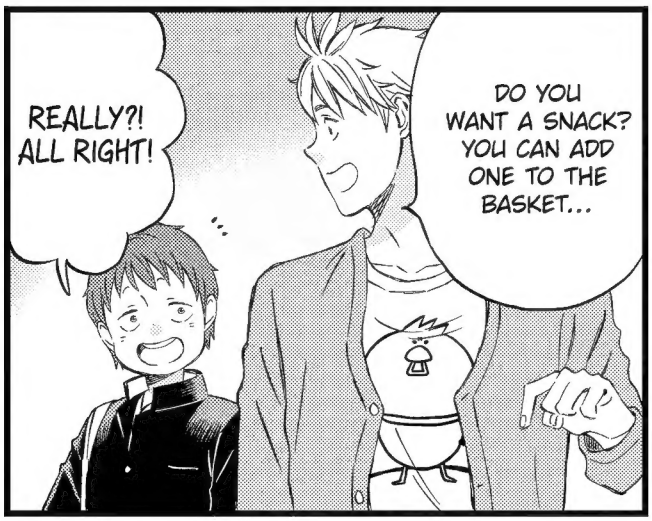
ARE YOU GOING SHOPPING? I'LL HELP YOU WITH THE BAGS.

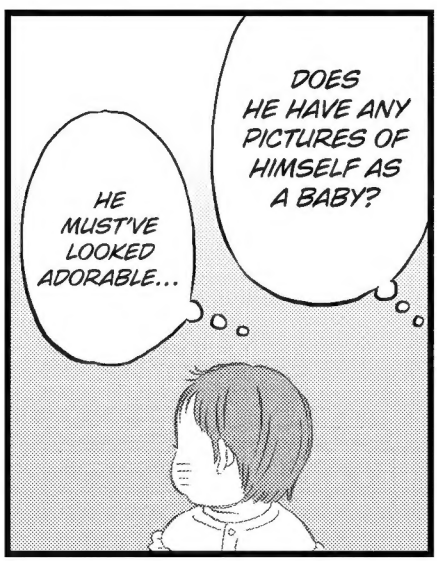
THANK YOU. I APPRECIATE THE HELP.

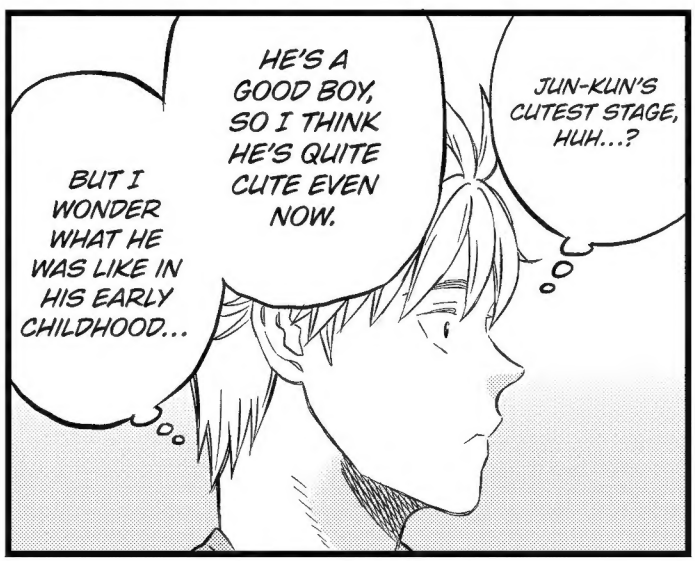
5


SUPER MARKET
SUPER MARKET

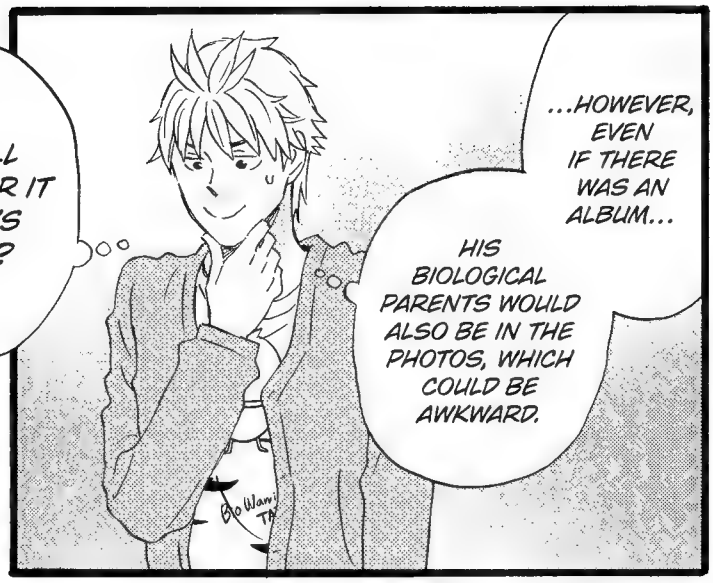
Yay! Snacks!
Thmp
Thmp

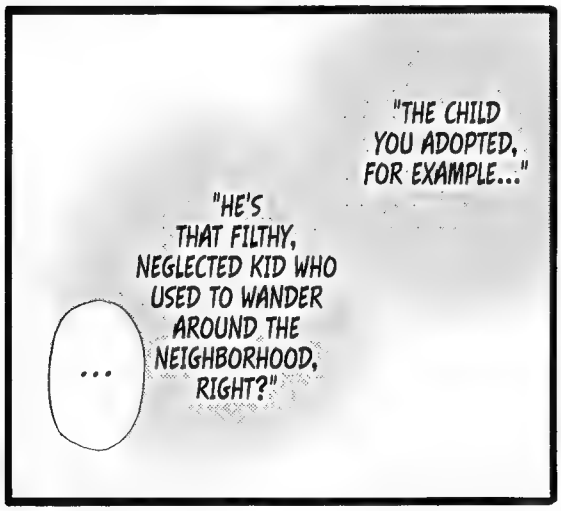

REALLY?! ALL RIGHT!
DO YOU WANT A SNACK? YOU CAN ADD ONE TO THE BASKET...


DOES HE HAVE ANY PICTURES OF HIMSELF AS A BABY?
HE MUST'VE LOOKED ADORABLE...

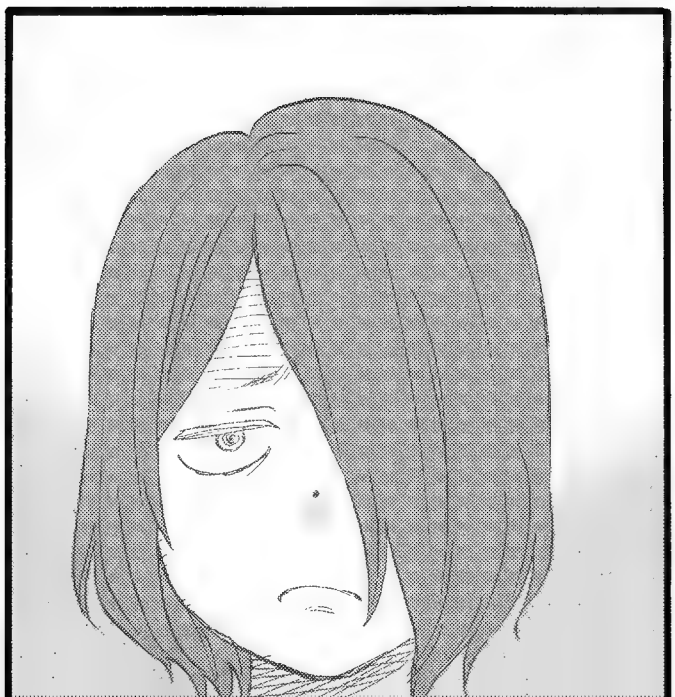

JUN-KUN'S CUTEST STAGE, HUH...?
HE'S A GOOD BOY, SO I THINK HE'S QUITE CUTE EVEN NOW.
BUT I WONDER WHAT HE WAS LIKE IN HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD...

MAYBE I'LL ASK HIM FOR IT WHEN HE'S OLDER...?


...HOWEVER, EVEN IF THERE WAS AN ALBUM...
HIS BIOLOGICAL PARENTS WOULD ALSO BE IN THE PHOTOS, WHICH COULD BE AWKWARD.


"THE CHILD YOU ADOPTED, FOR EXAMPLE..."
"HE'S THAT FILTHY, NEGLECTED KID WHO USED TO WANDER AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD, RIGHT?"
...

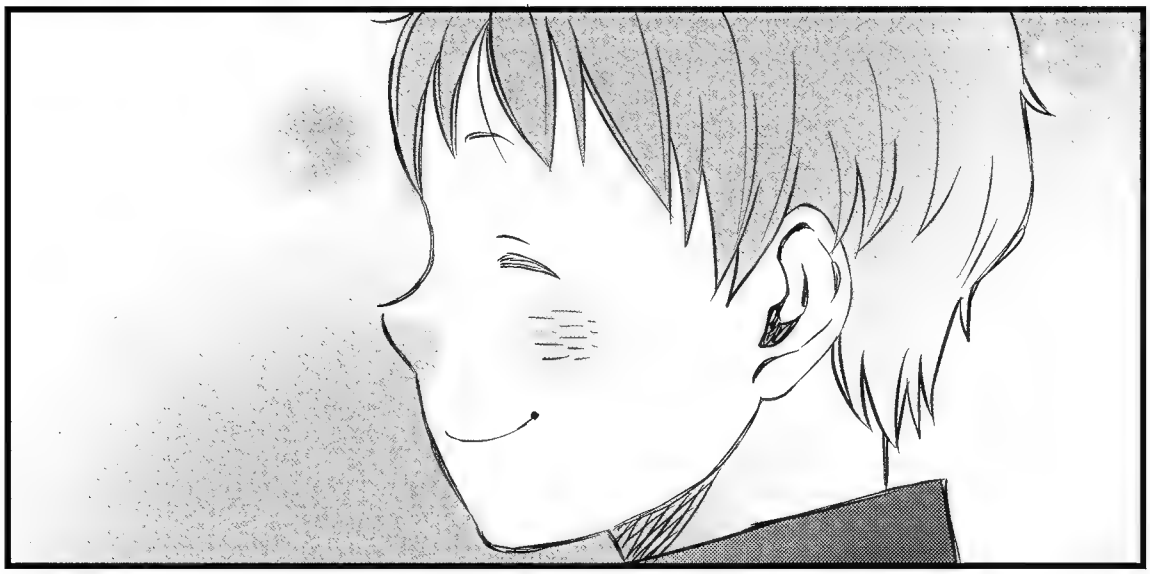
ALL RIGHT! THAT'S ONE OF MY FAVORITES!
CHICKEN THIGHS WERE ON SALE TODAY, SO I'M MAKING OYAKODON.
HEH HEH HEH!
Tmp
Tmp



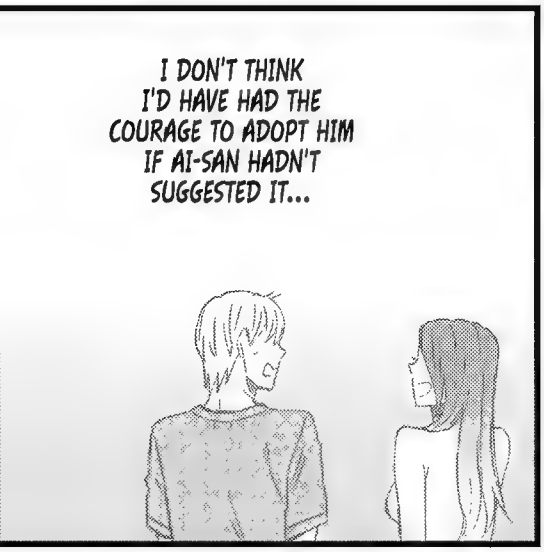
"HE'S LIKE A TOTALLY ADORABLE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL KID!"

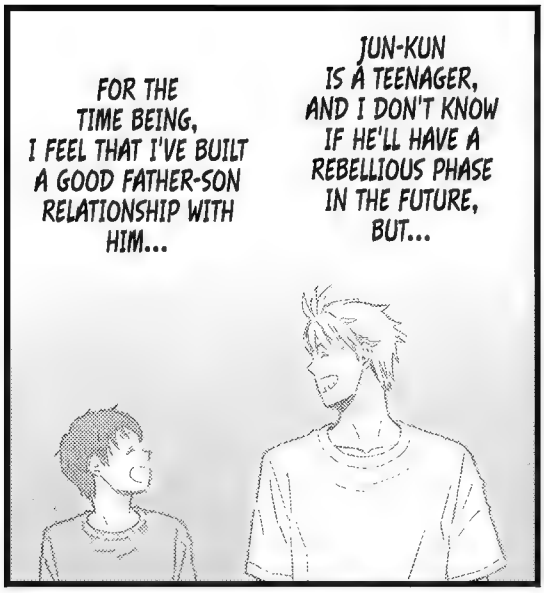
"HE WAS JUST CREEPY AND GLOOMY WHEN I FIRST NOTICED HIM. BUT NOW?"

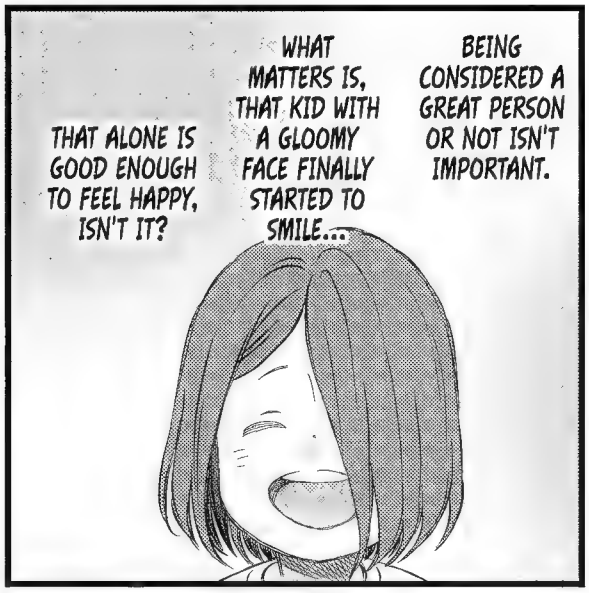
"BUT YOU KNOW? EVER SINCE YOU AND YOUR WIFE ADOPTED THAT BOY, HE LOOKS LIKE A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PERSON!"

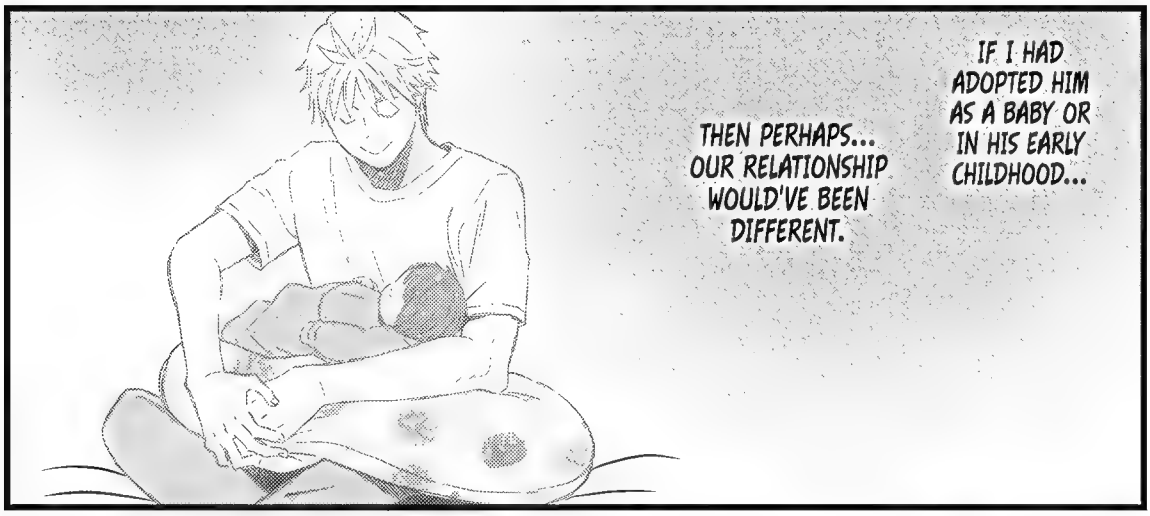


I DON'T THINK I'D HAVE HAD THE COURAGE TO ADOPT HIM IF AI-SAN HADN'T SUGGESTED IT...



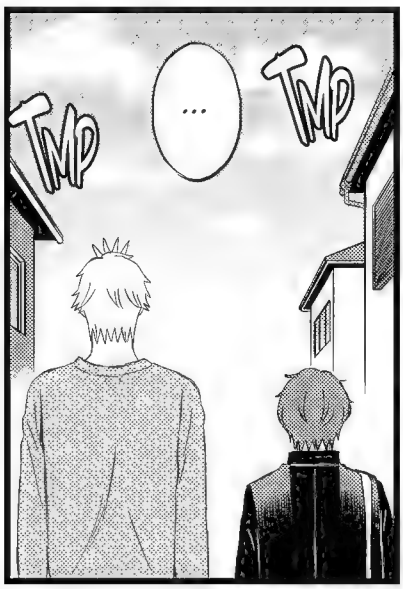

FOR THE TIME BEING, I FEEL THAT I'VE BUILT A GOOD FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM...
JUN-KUN IS A TEENAGER, AND I DON'T KNOW IF HE'LL HAVE A REBELLIOUS PHASE IN THE FUTURE, BUT...

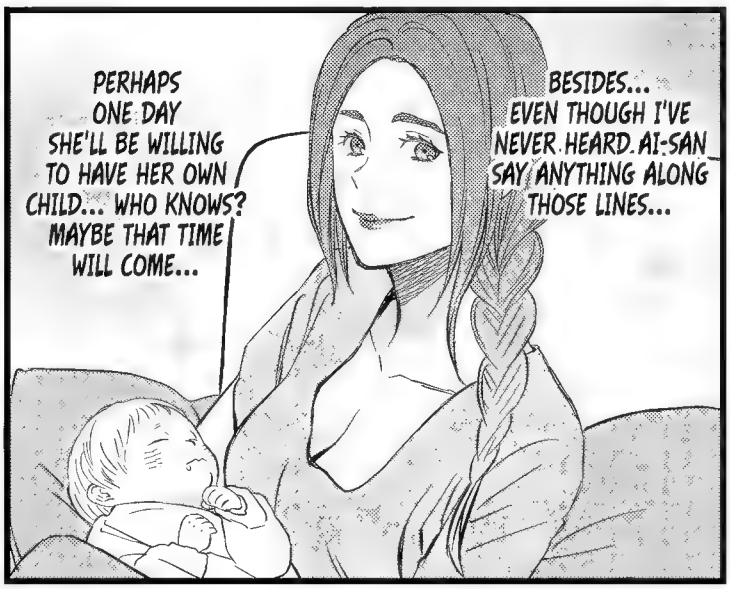

THAT ALONE IS GOOD ENOUGH TO FEEL HAPPY, ISN'T IT?
WHAT MATTERS IS, THAT KID WITH A GLOOMY FACE FINALLY STARTED TO SMILE...
BEING CONSIDERED A GREAT PERSON OR NOT ISN'T IMPORTANT.

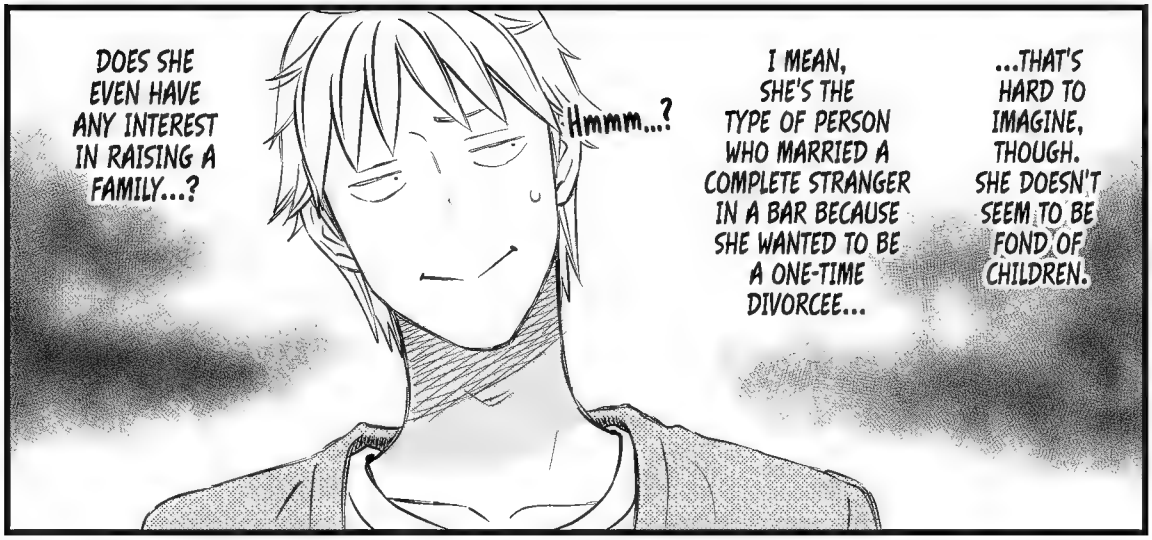

THEN PERHAPS... OUR RELATIONSHIP WOULD'VE BEEN DIFFERENT.
IF I HAD ADOPTED HIM AS A BABY OR IN HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD...

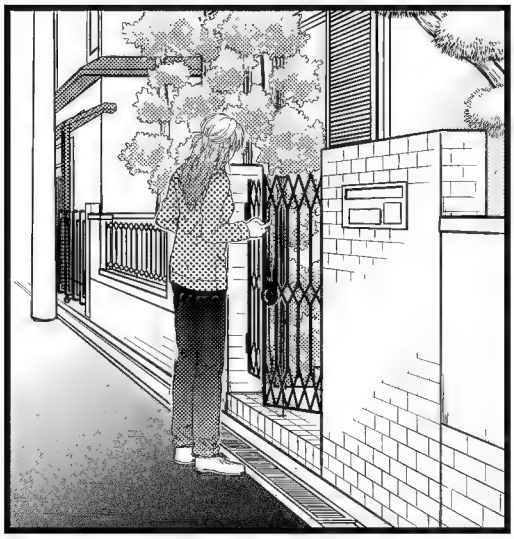
I THINK JUN-KUN IS GREAT THE WAY HE IS RIGHT NOW.

I HEAR THAT CHILDREN HAVE THEIR CUTEST PERIOD AROUND THAT AGE, BUT...
I BELIEVE THAT'S ALSO THEIR MOST TROUBLESOME PHASE...


TMP
...
TMP


PERHAPS ONE DAY SHE'LL BE WILLING TO HAVE HER OWN CHILD... WHO KNOWS? MAYBE THAT TIME WILL COME...
BESIDES... EVEN THOUGH I'VE NEVER HEARD AI-SAN SAY ANYTHING ALONG THOSE LINES...


DOES SHE EVEN HAVE ANY INTEREST IN RAISING A FAMILY...?
Hmmm...?
I MEAN, SHE'S THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO MARRIED A COMPLETE STRANGER IN A BAR BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO BE A ONE-TIME DIVORCEE...
...THAT'S HARD TO IMAGINE, THOUGH. SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE FOND OF CHILDREN.



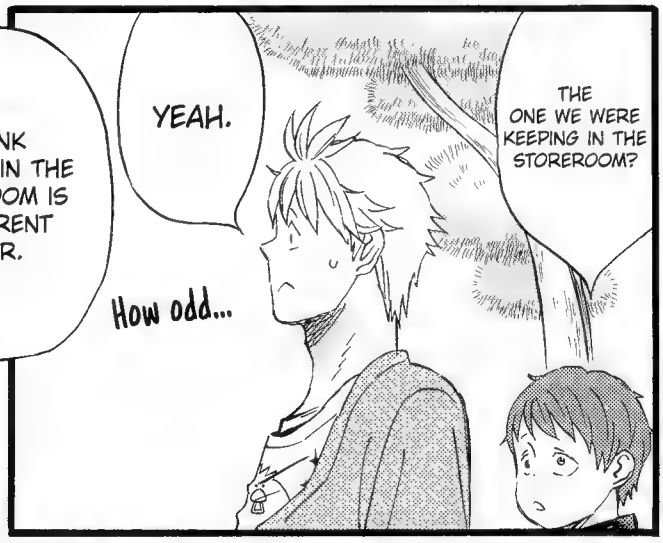
HM?
HALT
OH...?
HALT

UM... DO YOU HAVE SOME SORT OF BUSINESS AT THIS HOUSE?
...!
??
I'M SO SORRY...!
AH.
E-EXCUSE ME!
Dash
I DON'T HAVE ANY BUSINESS ...!

IS THAT THE STROLLER AI-SAN GOT FROM HER FRIEND? WHAT'S IT DOING HERE...?
OH?

NO CLUE...
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?

WHAT ...?
I THINK THE ONE IN THE STOREROOM IS A DIFFERENT COLOR.

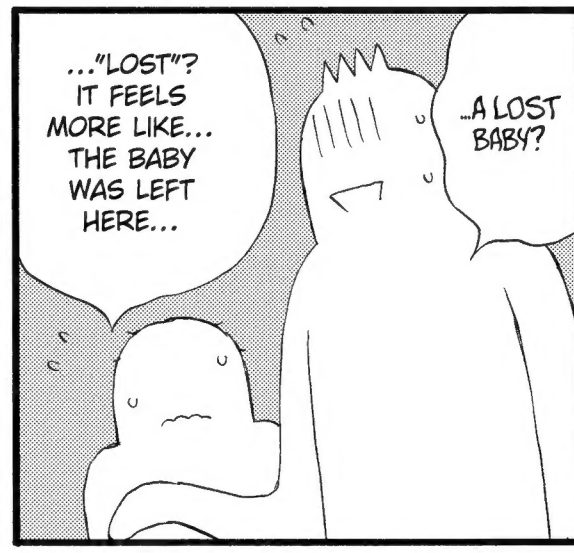

YEAH.
How odd...
THE ONE WE WERE KEEPING IN THE STOREROOM?

Rattle...
Bio Warrior TATS

...
...

...UHH...

UH, WHAT? WHAT DOES IT SAY?
OH. IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S SOME KIND OF LETTER.
flap
LET'S SEE...


..."LOST"? IT FEELS MORE LIKE... THE BABY WAS LEFT HERE...
...A LOST BABY?

"THIS GIRL IS JUN'S LITTLE SISTER. HER NAME IS MIU."

"PLEASE LOOK AFTER HER..."

Her name is Miu.
"Please look after her."

...

...WHAT?!